

DigDeep Releases New Report Showing Lack of Basic Water and Sanitation Services Costs US Economy \$8.58 Billion per Year

The study, "Draining," is the first to calculate the price tag of allowing millions of Americans to live without running water or a flush toilet at home.

LOS ANGELES, CA, USA, June 28, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, human rights nonprofit [DigDeep](#) released a report that reveals America's hidden water crisis is costing the United States economy a staggering \$8.58 billion each year. This economic impact study is a follow-up to the US Water Alliance and DigDeep's groundbreaking 2019 report, "[Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States](#): A National Action Plan," which revealed that over 2.2 million Americans live without running water or a flush toilet at home.



A resident of Prewitt, New Mexico hauls water to her house.

While most Americans take this basic infrastructure for granted, daily life looks very different for the families who live inside the water access gap. Adults and children spend hours each week hauling water from streams, wells, or grocery stores — hours taken away from work, studying, or playing. They have a higher risk of waterborne disease, diabetes, physical injury, and acute mental stress, and must also shoulder the healthcare bills that follow.

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George McGraw, founder and CEO of DigDeep

These very real economic losses are felt first by the

individuals and families living inside the water access gap, and then ripple outwards through their communities and into the entire national economy in the form of healthcare costs for uninsured individuals, labor market disruptions, and decreased economic activity.

In this report, DigDeep analyzed a wide variety of public health and economic data to calculate the price tag of life without a toilet or tap. The findings are striking, despite the fact that the study population is somewhat smaller than the full water gap — at about 539,000 households or 1.57 million Americans. Key findings from "[Draining: The Economic Impact of America's Hidden Water Crisis](#)," include:

- Allowing millions of Americans to live without a toilet or tap at home costs the US economy \$8.58 billion each year. This averages out to \$15,800 per impacted household in healthcare costs, lost productivity at work and at school, and premature death — costs that have devastating ripple effects throughout the national economy. In many cases, those costs amount to more than that household's annual income.
- The 5 largest economic costs are: time lost at work or school hauling water (\$846 million); physical health impacts (\$762 million); water purchase costs (\$291 million); mental health impacts (\$218 million); and additional GDP impacts from lost productivity (\$924 million).
- The economic benefits of closing the US water access gap outweigh the costs by nearly 5 to 1. For every \$1 invested, the economy sees \$4.65 in societal return. That's \$1.65 in direct benefits, such as lowered healthcare costs and more time to work or study, and \$3 in implicit benefits by reducing premature loss of life.
- Closing the water access gap could unlock nearly \$200 billion of economic value over the next 50 years.

"While speaking to communities for our 2019 report Closing the Water Access Gap in the US, we heard devastating stories about impacts to people's health, employment, leisure time, and general wellbeing," says George McGraw, founder and CEO of DigDeep. "Now we are finally able to measure the true magnitude of those impacts in real dollars. We must close the water access gap. As this report shows, we can't afford not to."

This report provides four recommendations for regulators and policymakers looking to close the US water gap. It outlines in detail how to expand and refocus federal funding; collect better, more actionable data; treat the water access gap as a crisis; and build a domestic Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) sector to drive innovation and hold the government accountable to impacted communities.

The economic analysis was conducted in partnership with Altarum, a nonprofit organization focused on advancing the health of individuals with fewer financial resources and populations disenfranchised by the healthcare system. Additional advisory support was provided by the American Heart Association, the International Association of Plumbing & Mechanical Officials (IAPMO), and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

ABOUT DIGDEEP: DigDeep is a human rights nonprofit working to ensure every American has access to running water and sanitation. DigDeep's community-led infrastructure projects have brought clean, running water to hundreds of families through the award-winning Navajo Water

Project (Arizona, New Mexico and Utah) and Appalachia Water Project (West Virginia). DigDeep is a leading voice in research, workforce development, and policy advocacy around water access in the US.

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